



State of Connecticut
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Distinguished chairs Senator Gerratana and Representative Ritter, and honorable members of the Public Health Committee: I am State Representative Chris Perone and I am here to speak in support of House Bill 6285 - "An Act Prohibiting Smoking in Motor Vehicles."

The purpose of this law is to protect children from secondhand smoke. And while this law contains penalties for noncompliance, it is my hope that the state never see a single dime of revenue from this bill. What would better for our state and our children is that this legislation lead to behavioral change on the part of parents who smoke in a car with children present.

The good news is that 82% of adults support banning smoking in vehicles with children under age 13. The bad news is that a 2012 study in the Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics concluded that "The majority of smoking parents exposed their children to tobacco smoke in cars" and that "few smoking parents had a strictly enforced smoke-free car policy."

Several years ago, the Surgeon General put it succinctly: children are the only population group that has not seen a significant reduction in exposure to secondhand smoke. In fact, on average, children are exposed to more secondhand smoke than non-smoking adults. As the Surgeon General's report further pointed out, "It is ironic that the Americans who are at the greatest risk from secondhand smoke and who are least able to defend themselves are also the least protected and the most heavily exposed."

Children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of secondhand smoke because they breathe quicker than adults, are still physically developing, and have little or no control over their indoor environments. Researchers at Harvard found "alarming" levels of second-hand smoke in cars after just five minutes. It didn't matter if the windows were down. The air pollution was even higher than in similar studies of smoky bars, including heightened levels of carbon monoxide. Here several ways that second hand smoke can harm infants and older children:

Infants

- Ear infections
- Development of bronchitis and pneumonia
- Increased mortality rates of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)

For older children, the situation does not improve. Secondhand smoke can cause serious health problems including:

- Frequent lower respiratory illness
- Wheezing and coughing
- More frequent and severe asthma attacks
- Ear infections

The public is already responding to these hazards and seven states plus the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico have passed laws banning smoking in cars with children.

But to be quite candid, why should it matter what other states are doing? We have the research from the Surgeon General's office. The American Medical Association. We have the data from Harvard. And it all points to the same conclusion: The debate is over. Secondhand smoke, especially in concentrated forms, is incredibly harmful to children. To compound the problem, children do not have a choice of whether or not they get exposed to secondhand smoke in the car. This legislation would protect those who cannot protect themselves.

One of the arguments against this legislation is that it is potentially unenforceable. That it is unreasonable to expect the police to stop everyone they see smoking to check if there is a child in the car. I don't agree with this line of thinking for two reasons. The first is that this new law would be enforced in much the same way that seatbelt laws are currently enforced. In the normal course of their duties. i.e. Either through a traffic stop or visually from a reasonable vantage point. My other disagreement with this is that a ban doesn't restrict smokers' personal freedoms. Nothing in this bill would curb anyone's ability to smoke — as long as it's not imposed on helpless bystanders, such as children in this case. An example would be smoking bans in bars and restaurants. Adults have a right to smoke in their own vehicles. But when children are present, the freedom to fill a car with smoke should take a back seat.

As a legislative body, we lead the nation when it comes to banning things that common sense and good data tell us are harmful to children. Connecticut has banned the use of pesticides which contain Arsenic. We banned the use of paint containing Lead. The use of Cadmium in batteries and children's toys. We heavily regulate the disposal of gasoline and paint thinner because Benzene and Toluene are dangerous to children, adults and the environment. And I'm assuming that we have banned either in statute or in practice, allowing children to play with chemical weapons. Because, after all, these weapons contain Hydrogen Cyanide.

So when is Connecticut going to stop allowing children to be strapped into a car and forced to inhale every one of the chemicals I just listed? Every time a cigarette is lit inside a car, the vehicle becomes filled with these toxins — toxins that a child with no say in the matter is forced to breathe.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Chir Perone". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Chir" is written with a large, looped 'C' and a small 'h'. The last name "Perone" is written with a large, looped 'P' and a small 'e' at the end.